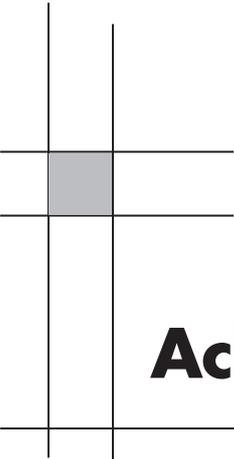


Getting Results with Curriculum Mapping

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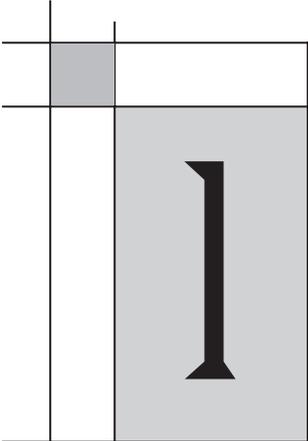


Acknowledgments

Colleagues create new pathways in a shared profession. It is as if we walk along a common trail of practice and consider the possible directions we might go. Each and every author in this book has been a resourceful and energetic colleague. The people at ASCD have been tremendously supportive of this work, and I value their ability to take the long view for our learners. It has been a joy to work with the insightful and experienced Joyce McLeod as our ASCD development editor. I wish to acknowledge the influence of one of my mentors, Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum from Teachers College, Columbia University, who has shown intellectual persistence over a remarkable lifetime career. My assistant, Kathy Scoli, personifies reliability and competence, making each workday a pleasure.

As a genuine 21st-century shift in our practice, mapping requires knowledge and courage. I am indebted to the countless teachers, administrators, technology programmers, and staff developers in the field who have shared their suggestions as we journey through curriculum mapping. In particular, I want to thank my family, Jeffrey, Rebecca, and Matt, for their constant love and support. They are always with me.

—Heidi Hayes Jacobs

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of lines. A vertical line is on the left, and a horizontal line is at the top. A small gray square is in the top-left corner. A larger gray rectangle is on the left side, containing a large, bold, black letter 'I'.

Development of a Prologue

Setting the Stage for Curriculum Mapping

Heidi Hayes Jacobs

“Prologue” in Greek means “before the action of the play.” Setting the stage, literally and figuratively, elevates the attention of all participants—the actors, the director, and the intended audience. As I have observed schools and districts develop their mapping projects, ample preparation time has characterized the most effective attempts. Clearly, the most successful education settings have crafted a prologue to their actions. They used advance scouting reports, research, and discussion groups before they applied substantial effort and energy. Then they identified key people and charged those people with advance planning for a new and dynamic shift in curriculum decision making.

Those effective districts and schools gave themselves permission to find out what they needed to know in order to create the conditions for success. Rather than acting on a strange statement that runs through some education circles—“We have the right to fail”—these people said, “We have the right to succeed.” Rather than starting a mapping initiative by abruptly declaring that “We are going to start curriculum mapping, folks,” the leadership teams and district personnel began by looking at the needs of their specific student population. They began by finding out how other schools used curriculum mapping to help with teaching and learning. Mapping can be an extraordinary vehicle to meet carefully defined needs. Curriculum mapping is a procedure for collecting data about the operational curriculum in a school or district referenced directly to the calendar. Mapping provides the basis for authentic

examination of that database in conjunction with assessment information about learners. Curriculum mapping is best carried out electronically so that both communication and revisions can be immediate.

Defining Success with Mapping

Success in a mapping program is defined by two specific outcomes: measurable improvement in student performance in the targeted areas, and the institutionalization of mapping as a process for ongoing curriculum and assessment review.

Improvement in student performance can be in developing academic skills, but it can also focus on developing character traits, aesthetic awareness, or athletic prowess. Students in any given environment need a range of proficiencies to increase the quality of their work and their lives.

For example, in an outstanding independent school, the faculty members focused on increasing their students' willingness to take risks when writing and to treat peers with more respect. In a rural school in the Midwest, teachers were eager to expand their students' openness to artistic and aesthetic experience. In many of our nation's classrooms, fundamental literacy skills are identified as a priority so learners can have access to all areas of the curriculum.

The Empty Chair

For many years now, whenever I work with a school or district, we begin the workshop or meeting by placing an empty chair in clear view of all participants. We envision that a student sits in that chair. We even use the first name of an actual child who attends the school—perhaps it's Johnny, Maria, Abdul, Megan, Tyler, or Janice. All our work that day must focus on Johnny, and all comments and questions are welcomed as long as they are in his best interest. We may disagree about what is in his best interest, but we do not lose the student as our perspective. Success really does come down to the critical point whereby we are working for specific learners in specific places to meet their specific needs. As Ouchi (2003, p. 159) of UCLA's Anderson Graduate School of Management states:

Almost every expert who has studied successful schools says that they are learning communities where everyone is on the same page. The adults involved in the school—meaning the parents and teachers—must share the same vision of what the school should be.

A community is a group of individuals who have come together around a common goal, the unique definition of what kind of school they want to have. It will always be different for each school, as it should be, but it will always focus on the welfare of the children.

An Advance Team: Carrying Out Mapping R&D

Schools that have sustained this successful work—those in which teachers appear to be engaged in the review process and where results for learners are significant—began their mapping efforts with an advance cadre of research and development (R&D). This cadre carries out the necessary research to develop a plan of action. Composed of teachers and administrators from each site (or division, if working on the independent school level), the cadre members commence the initial investigative part of the process. The following four steps for crafting the prologue will help advance leadership planners launch a curriculum mapping initiative. References to upcoming chapters in this book are highlighted as they pertain to supporting each step.

Step 1: Focus on Research That Commences the Prologue

The ultimate goal of the prologue is to research external and internal data leading to recommendations about planning and instituting the mapping process. Researchers are concerned with all of the factors that have a direct effect on curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Eventually, they will make specific site-based recommendations about beginning and sustaining the mapping process. A large district may want to undertake mapping, but the power of the work is at the

site. The district level can assist in orchestrating, coordinating, and supporting mapping work, but mapping succeeds best if the special characteristics and needs of each site are respected.

External data include becoming familiar with the mapping process and visiting and interviewing schools that have incorporated mapping into their decision-making process. Reading pertinent articles or books, viewing videos, and attending conferences and training on mapping and alignment are part of initial scouting. The review of internal data starts with unpacking assessment data about learners, considering students' demographic data, ascertaining each teacher's readiness to map, reflecting on the staff's past successful development efforts, and sketching out possible time frames for planning the workshops. The planning team should ask these questions:

- What are the optimum conditions for success?
- Who should meet with whom to start our work?
- What types of venues make sense for the readiness level of our staff members?
- What technology formats are available or could become available?

Mapping is a venture that requires preparedness through R&D. Taking the time to invest in the intellectual capital of the leadership cadre will reap dividends in the years ahead when virtually all teachers will be entering and reviewing their mapping data.

In 1991, Dr. Ann Johnson and her team of bright, motivated, and humorous teachers from Ankeny, Iowa, packed a van and traveled from the plains to the mountains of Colorado to attend an ASCD workshop. Dr. Johnson wanted her group to know more and ask more about mapping, and she wanted the “gel” that traveling can bring. With nuance, depth, and power, her group has continued to work and build their mapping program into this new century. Located in the greater Des Moines area, Ankeny has the blend of suburb and rural community that is prevalent throughout the heartland of the United States. What is remarkable about this district is the sustained growth it has demonstrated. Dr. Johnson prepared her group through reading, conferences, videos, interviews, site visits, and planning. The humor was always there when needed. Chapter 4 of this book reflects the power of the prologue that was part of the Ankeny planning experience. It is fair to say that the schools in Ankeny could not have had their long-term success while using the mapping process among learners if the teachers had jumped into mapping cold.

The active professional development consortium, Co-Nect, which is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, recommends that formal surveys of staff members and students can prove most helpful when asking about their knowledge and interest in mapping. Through tallying responses, the advance leadership team can bring even more power to the planning process

(Friedberg & Fedolfi, 2001, p. 32). From the outset, input from all parties and from local demographic data is a fundamental part of internal research.

Another internal consideration is the professional expertise of staff members. Successful workshops on mapping basics should correspond to the faculty’s background in assessment, curriculum design, and familiarity with standards. Schools in which the faculty’s readiness in those areas is strong will tend to work much faster than schools whose faculties lack such experience.

Step 2: Draft an Action Plan

The advance team’s investigations lead to their drafting an action plan that describes a sensible series of actions to implement mapping. Incremental steps translate into a plan for the next few months, six months, one year, or even three years. There is no question that plans change, but it is critical to have a plan to react to in the beginning of the mapping process. In fact, many schools “map the mapping process.” (See Appendix 4 for an example of this.)

The need to align classroom work with standards has been a driving force behind the curriculum mapping process. A strong and compelling argument can be made for the power of integrating standards into the maps with a direct eye to student assessment. Research from the Ohio State Administrative Council report, *A Case Study of Key Effective Practices in Ohio’s Improved School Districts*